# ANTONIO HENRIQUE AMARAL'S *BATTLEFIELD* PAINTINGS (1973-1974) AND THE BRAZILIAN MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Art History

Department of Art and Art History

The University of Utah

May 2017

# The University of Utah Graduate School

## STATEMENT OF THESIS APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

My thesis explores how Brazilian artist Antônio Henrique Amaral grappled with the censorship and oppression of the military regime (1964-1985) in his series of oil paintings entitled *Campos de batalha* (*Battlefields*, 1973-1974). In these works, he included various representations of bananas that are decaying and bound or mutilated by knives, forks, and ropes. Central to these paintings is the multifaceted symbolism of the banana, and in particular the critical stance against oppression and human rights' abuses in the work *Campo de batalha 3* (1973). I build my argument on art critic Frederico Morais's comparison of the banana as a surrogate human body and Czech born philosopher Vilém Flusser's interest in exploring the political meanings inherent to the fruit. My thesis develops these claims further by including testimonies and declassified documents that account for the violence and oppression at that time and how Amaral's paintings address these conditions. In general, art produced under the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985) responded to the highly oppressive atmosphere, which manifested in selective arrests, institutionalized torture, and disappearances of those deemed dissidents of the regime. My research incorporates Amaral's role as a painter during a time when oil paint was not a popular medium and as a relocated artist contending with the art market in New York during the early 1970s. The last section of my thesis chronicles efforts by Brazil's National Truth Commission and other social groups not only to substantiate the events of torture and disappearances, but also to

preserve this history for future generations. I make the claim that during our present moment, Amaral's oil paintings form part of a visual archive documenting the period of the military regime.

For Patricia, Jon, Lauren, and Kate.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

In Antônio Henrique Amaral's (1935-2015) oil painting *Campo de batalha 3* (1973), a withered life-size banana lies in a strangely precarious situation, incapacitated by a rope that binds the fruit to a knife and a fork. A yellow drip sits on the bottom left edge of the dish, while the shadow that looms under the tangled mass of metal and fruit bears a sinister resemblance to the country of Brazil. Straying from the traditional depictions of fruit in painted still lifes, the composition is illogical in that a banana, an inanimate object, need not be restrained. The painting's large scale (5 x 6 ft) suggests a meaning more powerful than the banal subject matter depicted, insisting that the exhibited scene not be overlooked. At the time this painting was created, Brazil was in the middle of the most violent period of its military dictatorship (1964-1985), which is noted for censorship, selective arrests, forced disappearances, and systematic torture towards those who opposed the new repressive government. In Amaral's *Campo de batalha 3*, the banana, suggestive of a tropical environment, alludes to these human rights' abuses and oppression of the Brazilian population. In this painting, the stark light mimics the interior of an interrogation room and the repetitive wrapping of the stylized cord evokes the pattern of the bars of a jail cell. The title *Campo de batalha* translates to "battlefield," suggesting that Brazil was the site where the authoritarian regime and civilians waged war. From 1973-1974, Amaral created a series of 19 paintings, including *Campo de batalha 3*, which all depict the similar subject matter of mutilated bananas.

The Brazilian artist's *Campos de batalha* series as well as his early oil paintings of banana fruit show a gradual digression throughout the series, as the images become increasingly violent. Amaral's earlier works, which illustrate green and under-ripened bunches of bananas still attached to the tree are replaced later by fruit that is shriveled under the weight of pewter utensils. In the final phase of Amaral's *Campos de batalha* paintings, the scenes become increasingly abusive and claustrophobic. For example, the close-up composition of *Campo de batalha 31* (1974) shows only bits of a banana that cling to the metal of the utensils, which have violently and voraciously obliterated any trace of the fruit. The composition closes in on the forks' tines, mimicking the verticality of the bars of a jail cell, further encouraging an interpretation of an imprisoned and confined body. Amaral, like a number of visual artists from this time period, was responding to the highly politicized circumstances surrounding the authoritarian rule.

Within my M.A. thesis, I explore the complex symbolism of the banana and how Amaral's *Campos de batalha* series has been analyzed in previous scholarship. Through an analysis of this series and his other paintings that incorporate the subject of the banana, I expand on the symbolism of the yellow fruit, connecting it to a human body in order to address the oppression and human rights' abuses committed by the military dictatorship. Lastly, I incorporate the Brazilian government's contemporary efforts to uncover events surrounding torture and disappearances of individuals under the regime, as well as other social organization's attempts to preserve the material culture from that time period. My thesis addresses the painting *Campo de batalha 3* as not only a response to the political turmoil of Brazil at that time, but also as a topic that has not been given adequate scholarly attention. Claudia Calirman's *Brazilian Art Under Dictatorship*

(2012) and Elena Shtromberg's book *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (2016) are two recent books that emphasize how Brazilian art shifted away from an institutional setting towards public accessibility and collective participation during the military dictatorship. Although research on painters and sculptors at this time exists, there appears to be a gap in analysis of how artists employing traditional media and working within museums were influenced by this political context. I argue that during our present moment, Amaral's oil paintings form part of a visual archive documenting the period of the military dictatorship, a contemporary effort taken on by the Brazilian government and other social activist groups in Brazil.

In 1974, Czech-born critic and theorist Vilém published an article in São Paulo's journal *Artes* titled "Campos de Batalha: Tornar visível o invisível" ("Battlefields: Making the Invisible Visible"), which questioned the significance of the oversized and violent depictions of silverware and mutilated bananas in Amaral's work. Flusser initiated this inquiry by questioning the curious arrangement of the objects in the series of paintings and noted that those who cannot see past the naturalistic technique and commonplace subject matter could easily ignore the absurdity of the compositions. In his writing, Flusser sought to understand Amaral's *Campos de batalha* paintings through an ethical, aesthetic, and a technical approach. Through these lenses, Flusser argued that Amaral's subject matter and the medium of painting take on new interpretations that exemplified an urgency that neither bananas nor oil painting had held before. Flusser implored the viewer to suspend their preconceptions of the fruit in order to discover new and different interpretations. Noting the "brutal terror and heavy oppression" in the monumental series, Flusser pointed to but ultimately tiptoed around the insinuation of

Brazil's political turmoil at that time.[1] His argument built on German philosopher Edmund Husserl's work in phenomenology, a theory that explores how people encounter and interact with the world depending on their own perceptions and life experiences.[2] The concept of phenomenology, the central theory of Flusser's writing, is important to the viewer's relationship with Amaral's banana subject matter, as the audience presumably has eaten the fruits or at least encountered them in their daily life. Each viewer's interaction with the oil paintings illicits their own relationships and perceptions of the quotidian food object in how it tastes, feels, or smells. Through the medium of oil painting, the banana does not have an explicit meaning, but instead can be read in different ways that leads to new interpretations. It is the viewer's decision as to whether or not they will read further into the banal subject matter and symbolism of the paintings, or choose to view them as simply an oil still life. Flusser, instead of viewing the banana and the utensils in the *Campos de batalha* compositions as commonplace objects, argues that these items should be viewed in the scope of the political context that the paintings were created in.

On April 1, 1964, the Brazilian military overthrew President João Goulart, transforming the country from a democracy into a dictatorship that lasted for twenty-one

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[1] Flusser was born in Prague in 1920 into a Jewish family. He had moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1940, a year after the German Nazi occupation in Prague, and had learned of his family's death in Nazi concentration camps shortly after his arrival in Brazil. In a letter from Antônio Amaral on October 12, 1974, the artist thanks Flusser for his critical review of his work, particularly so because the writer published the article at the height of the military dictatorship. Flusser left Brazil in 1971, as it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to continue his academic and writing career without experiencing censorship or worse. This is likely why Flusser bypassed a blatant statement about the authoritarian government.

[2] Vilém Flusser, "Campos de batalha: tornar visível o invisível - mudar nossa maneira de viver," *Artes*, no. 43 (July 1975): 7.

years (1964-1985). At the time Antônio Amaral painted his *Campos de batalha* series, Brazil was experiencing the height of its corruption under the rule of President Emílio Garrastazu Médici (1969-1974), a five-year period often referred to as the *anos de chumbo* (the Leaden Years).[3] After the decree of Institutional Act 5 (AI-5) in 1968, which is noted for the suspension of *habeas corpus*, or basic human rights, this moment in Brazilian history was heavy with disappearances, systematic torture, and selective killings of people who identified with the opposition.[4] Suggestive of the title in Amaral's paintings, Brazil had become a place where altercations between the military and civilians were frequent. Opposition groups were comprised predominantly of young university students, intellectuals, and young professionals, who chiefly belonged to the middle, upper-middle, or even the wealthy class. Social groups of students and labor parties denounced the authoritarian regime in public protests, many of which ended in violence, arrests, and at times deaths. Other more extreme activist groups, who were part of the *luta armada* (armed fight) resorted to radical activity, such as kidnapping ambassadors and holding them ransom for the release of political prisoners.[5]

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[3] *Anos de chumbo* refers to Medici's rule from 1968-1974 and is characterized as the most violent period of the military dictatorship. As all of the leaders in the Brazilian dictatorship were military leaders, General Médici ruled on the side of the hard-liners, the population who was in support of the regime and resorted to extreme measures to silence their opponents. This period marks a widespread practice of torture in Brazil.

[4] Institutional Act 5 (IA-5) passed under President Artur da Costa e Silva, however the practice of direct military action quickly worsened when President Médici took office the following year.

[5] In September 1969, American ambassador, Charles Elbrick, was kidnapped by the armed organization MR-8 in exchange for fifteen political prisoners. This event was considered a success for the leftist group. The story of this kidnapping was made into the 1997 film *O Que É Isso Companheiro?*, directed by Bruno Barreto and starring Alan Arkin as Ambassador Elbrick. The film also showed to American audiences under the title *Four Days in September*.

In a similar vein to Flusser's analysis, art critic and historian, Frederico Morais addressed the cruel treatment of the bananas in "O corpo contra os metais da oppressão" (The Body Against the Metals of Oppression) saying that within *Campos de batalha* series the banana was no longer symbolic of a tropical ideal and instead, "…the banana could be found rotten, bound, gagged [with] 'bruises' covering its entire 'body.'"[6] Morais's statement seemingly references corporeal punishment, pointedly identifying the banana as a victim of arbitrary abuse and alluding to the military's violent practices during the 1960s and 1970s.[7] Morais's analysis is noteworthy as he was one of the most influential critical voices in contemporary art in Brazil during the 1970s and 80s, suggesting art practice move away from traditional media such as painting and sculpture and toward collective engagement between the public and artists.[8]

Morais's ideas, along with the practice of other artists in Brazil at this time, was

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[6] Frederico Morais, "O corpo contra os metais da opressão," in *Antonio Henrique Amaral: Obra em processo*, by Antonio Henrique Amaral, et al. (São Paulo: DBA, 1997), 45.

[7] Ibid, 40.

[8] Morais is noted for having organized two influential exhibitions, *O corpo do terra* (1970) and *Domingos da criação* (1971), during the time of the military dictatorship. These shows were essential in the creation of art production in Brazil at this time, as they brought together artists who engaged with the society and public spaces through interventions and happenings. For additional reading on these Morais's *Manifesto Do Corpo á Terra*, refer to Frederico Morais, "Manifesto do Corpo á Terra" [Manifesto of Body to Earth]; *Manifesto datilo-escrito*, April 18, 1970, pdf. Also, Claudia Calirman, "Artur Barrio: A New Visual Aesthetic," in *Brazilian Art Under Dictatorship: Antonio Manual, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), (Kindle edition) explores the artists and artworks in the exhibition *Do Corpo á Terra* in her section "Do Corpo à Terra: The Aesthetics of the Margins." For more reading on *Domingos da Criação*, refer to Morais's section "O público: O exercício da liberdade" in his book Frederico Morais, "O público: O exercício da liberdade," in *Artes plásticas: A crise da hora atual* (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil: Paz e Terra, 1975), 1-8. Elena Shtromberg elaborates on the events of *Domingos da Criação* in the introduction to her book *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2016), 1-2.

that art could surpass political strife and enrich human experience through the freedom found in artistic creation. This line of thought was central to artistic expression while other forms of art production, namely painting, were deemphasized in Brazil. However, as seen with Antônio Henrique Amaral, painting, although attached to the idea of art as commodity that was perpetuated by practicing artists, was still an important medium for addressing the political conflict during Brazil's military dictatorship.

## II. BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Antônio Amaral began his artistic career taking classes under Robert Sambonnet at the school of the Museum of Modern Art (MAM) in São Paulo in 1955, just nine years after the museum was founded. Amaral began studying drawing and printmaking in 1957 under the Brazilian artist Lívio Abramo at the Museum of Modern Art São Paulo (MAM-SP). In 1958, Amaral moved to Buenos Aires with a desire for artistic exploration, which eventually led him to Chile via an invitation from Arturo Edwards, the president at the time of the Chilean-British Cultural Institute. It was later that year that Amaral had his first solo show at the Museum of Modern Art in São Paulo of prints he made during his time in Chile and he had his first international exhibition at the Instituto de Arte Moderna do Chile, in Santiago and at the Universidad de Concepción, both in Chile. He continued his education in 1959 in New York at the Pratt Institute while studying wood engraving under Shiko Manakata and W. Rogalsky. Originally a printmaker, Amaral received notoriety with his oil paintings of bananas, which also appeared in works earlier than that *Campos de batalha* series. He began exploring this tropical subject matter in 1968. These earlier banana paintings, under the titles of *Brasiliana* and *Banana*, were Amaral's first works that showed in the U.S. These works were exhibited at the Bonino Gallery and Copacabana Palace Gallery, both in Rio de Janeiro, the Astréia Gallery in São Paulo, and

The Pan-American Union show in Washington D.C. in 1959.[9]

Broadly speaking, art created during the military dictatorship was produced within the cultural context of oppression and censorship although artists working during this time found that the censorship was not as clearly defined for them as for other modes of cultural production, such as literature, films, and theater.[10] As censors were often unpredictable, many artists consequently engaged in self-censorship.[11] Because the visual arts were considered to have an elite audience and less likely to instigate public resentment toward the authoritarian regime, artists were not subject to the same dangers of exile and arrest as those working in other creative spheres.[12]

At that time, artists in Brazil, like artists elsewhere in the world, sought to evade artistic institutions and works that could be easily commoditized. Although the Brazilian economy experienced major growth in the years following the military dictatorship, inflation resulted in the fluctuation in the value of the *cruzeiro*, causing unstable conditions in the daily currency value.[13] The Brazilian art market during the military dictatorship saw an influx of sales on expensive modernist paintings, as the newly wealthy population invested their money in art works as one of the assets at that time that

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[9] Washington D.C.'s Pan-American Union museum (now known as OAS – Organization of American States), the oldest art museum of modern and contemporary Latin American and Caribbean art in the United States. The Pan-American Union created an institution that encouraged international cooperation in legislation and academia in an effort to strengthen relations between Latin American nations and the United States.

[10] Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art Under Dictatorship: Antonio Manual, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 540, Kindle edition.

[11] Ibid, 529.

[12] Ibid, 540.

[13] Elena Shtromberg, *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2016), 14-16.

would retain market value.[14] Art production was influenced by the unpredictable financial situation, as artists questioned the political and social constructs of daily life.[15]

Amaral, who was exceptional as a painter and print-maker, was not initially recognized for his painting practice particularly because there seemed to be little interest in contemporary painting within the Brazilian art market at that time. Amaral did find some success with his banana paintings as he began painting his *Campos de batalha* series while in New York City between 1973-1974. In December of 1972, Amaral moved to New York City with the money that he was awarded by the Foreign Travel Prize at the Twentieth National Salon of Modern in Rio de Janeiro in 1971 with his oil paintings *Sequência 1*, *Sequência 2*, and *Sequência 3*.[16] It was after he moved to NYC that Amaral began to focus on the topic of bananas. The debut of his *Campos de batalha* paintings was a 1974 solo show of seventeen canvases at the Lee Ault & Co. gallery located in New York City. These paintings were shown later in various galleries and museums in Mexico, Brazil, and a few other smaller institutions in the United States, specifically the

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[14] Ibid,14-16. Such paintings sold at this time were viewed as alternative investments to stocks and property. Buyers were encouraged to capitalize on these artworks before their value deteriorated in price. These sales included paintings from Tarsila do Amaral, Emiliano di Cavalcanti, and Cândido Portinari.

[15] For additional information on the economic conditions that formed the art market in Brazil at that time, refer to Elena Shtromberg's chapter "Currency." Included in this chapter is a study of Cildo Meireles's *Banknotes Project*, which derided the institutions of government, art, and money. Elena Shtromberg, chapter one on currency in *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2016), 12-41.

[16] Margarida Sant'Anna, "Biographical Data," in *Antonio Henrique Amaral*, by Antônio Henrique Amaral, Maria Alice Milliet, and Margarida Sant'Anna (São Paulo, BR: Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2014), 247. The Salão Nacional de Arte Moderna was held in July of 1971. At this point, the only image of these three paintings that I could find is *Sequência 1*, which focuses on the green stem of an under ripe bunch of bananas. However, this does not account for the other two paintings, which could exhibit themes that are more violent, as seen in *Campo de batalha 3*.

Birmingham Art Museum in Alabama and the Nashville Fine Art Center in Tennessee.[17]

The Blanton Museum of Art's Latin American Collection in Austin, TX is noted as the first United States museum to own Amaral's work, specifically *Campo de batalha 31* (1974) and *Alone in Green* (1973).[18] These works were originally acquired by Barbara Duncan, an influential Latin American art collector, in 1975 and later donated to the Blanton Museum. The list of exhibitions in which Antônio Amaral's banana paintings have shown include *Art of the Fantastic* (1987), a *Pan American Union* exhibition in Washington D.C. (1971) and his most recent, a retrospective solo exhibition at the Pinacoteca in São Paulo in 2014. These exhibitions and the purchases of Amaral's artwork abroad focused on his oil paintings of the banana fruits. Broadly, he gained notoriety in the United States through the depictions of the tropical subject matter, which not only won him the coveted prize for travel but also put his work in the Latin American art collection at the Blanton Museum in Austin, TX.[19] The attention Amaral received for his banana series is revealing of the struggles of artists from Latin America, whose art was often typecast by US audiences and art critics as secondary or derivative of American art practices.

While living in the SoHo neighborhood of NYC, Amaral was among a group of other well-known Brazilian artists who had spent time in New York before him, such as

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[17] "One-man Exhibit: Antonio H. Amaral" (unpublished typescript, Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, AL, 1975). Exhibition records from the Birmingham Museum of Art show that Amaral's solo exhibition included seven paintings in total, however only four of them had the *Campo de batalha* title. *Alone in Green* (1973)(then part of Barbara Duncan's collection) was also exhibited in this particular show in 1975.

[18] Sant'Anna, "Biographical Data," in *Antonio Henrique Amaral*, 253.

[19] Curiously, when he returned to Brazil in 1975, he moved on to other subject matter.

Amilcar de Castro, Antonio Dias, Anna Bella Geiger, Rubens Gerchman, Cildo Meireles, and Helio Oiticica, all of whom have been the topic of significant academic research. Brazilian art historian Dária Jaremtchuk has conducted research on this group of Brazilian artists in New York during the time of the military dictatorship with her project entitled *Trânsitos e politica: Artistas brasileiros em Nova York durante a ditadura militar no Brasil* (*Relocation and Exile: Brazilian Artists in New York During the Brazilian Military Dictatorship*).[20] Her work investigates the art scene in New York during the 1960s and 1970s and the struggle Brazilian artists faced while living abroad. Jaremtchuk follows the travels of artists who were funded through Guggenheim and Fulbright fellowships for their work with traditional mediums, an unpopular practice among Brazilian artists. Her research places Amaral among other artists, such as Lygia Pape and Hélio Oiticica, who have been subjects of significant scholarship. However, Amaral was not only living and creating among relocated Brazilian artists, but also artists from other countries in South America.

With the increase of dictatorships in Latin America at this time, Europe and the United States became the cultural centers for artists and other intellectuals fleeing the political situation in their home countries such as, Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay. It was during life in New York that Amaral found himself among a group of other artists and

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[20]Carlos Haag, "The Subtleties of Latin American Good Neighborliness," in *Humanities: Fine Arts*, July 2013, 64-65. Jaremtchuk prefers to use the term "relocation" in lieu of the popularized word "exile," as her work emphasizes the artistic production of a group of intellects that were funded by Guggenheim, Fulbright Fellowships, and other awards, not enforced by the dictatorship. Dária Jaremtchuk, "Horizon de l'exode: l'insertion d'artistes brésiliens à New York" [Horizon of Exodus: Placement of Brazilian artists in New York], *Brésil(s)* 5 (2014): [13], accessed August 2, 2016, https://bresils.revues.org/881?lang=en#text.

intellectuals from Brazil's neighboring countries such as the German-born Uruguayan artist Luis Camnitzer, whose recent publication *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics and Liberation* (2007) investigates Latin American conceptual art.[21] Camnitzer and Jaremtchuck both elaborate on the struggle for artists from South American countries, including Argentina and Uruguay, to have their work considered by established U.S. art institutions, highlighting the instability of life and work for this particular group of artists while abroad. Both claim that, with the exception of some individuals like Amaral, these expatriate artists were not engaging with political themes necessarily but were instead experimenting with artistic styles and concepts that they explored in their own work while abroad. Amaral's attention to Brazilian political and social issues at this time sets him apart from the work of other artists from Latin America, whose work had little to do with the oppression in their home countries. However, he did experience the tribulations of the art market as an unknown Brazilian artist, as well as the looming realizations about the political atmosphere that threatened life back home in Brazil.

In a letter to his good friend and art critic Ferreira Gullar, Amaral acknowledges that his paintings would have a better chance to succeed in South American art markets and exhibitions if he were to return to Brazil, however the "censorship, arbitrary arrests, stagnation of friends, and the absence of cultural vitality" were all things that deterred him from returning.[22] On the other hand, his time in New York afforded him the ability to practice and think freely. Although Amaral had the freedom of artistic expression and

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[21] Luis Camnitzer, "Diaspora," in *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), 225-226.

[22] Antônio Henrique Amaral to Ferreira Gullar, June 8, 1974, ICAA Record ID: 1111048, Documents of 20th-century Latin American and Latino Art, International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, TX.

could engage in open political critique while living in the United States, his *Campo de batalha* series still exercised self-censorship through the incorporation of veiled symbols, such as the banana. Jaremtchuk explicitly states that Amaral is an exception to the artists she has researched, because he experienced success in some U.S. institutions.[23] She attributes Amaral's success to the fact that his paintings of bananas satisfied U.S. preconceptions of Latin American art by incorporating symbols emphasizing Brazil as a tropical and exotic location.[24]

For example, in September and October of 1971, several of Amaral's oil paintings exhibiting the banana showed at the Pan American Union gallery. Organized by the Department of Agricultural Affairs, this exhibition implied that Amaral's work was a visual representation of the economic relationship between the United States and Brazil as beneficial and profitable for both sides, especially on the export of agricultural produce.[25] Viewers could drink Caipirinhas, Brazil's national cocktail, while encountering monkeys dressed in green and yellow outfits, which further encouraged a tropical and exotic reading of Amaral's paintings, an idea that was illustrated in the show's printed text.[26] Interestingly, the exhibition pamphlet, written by Cuban art critic José Gómez-Sicre, did not include much about the banana as the topic of the paintings, but solely focused on an image of a mutual and productive relationship between Brazil

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[23] These institutions include the Birmingham Art Museum in Alabama, the Nashville Fine Art Center in Tennessee, the Blanton Art Museum in Texas, and the Lee Ault & Co. Gallery in New York.

[24] Haag, "The Subtleties of Latin American Good Neighbors," 66.

[25] José Gómez-Sicre, *The Banana: Variations in Oil by Antonio Henrique Amaral of Brazil* (Washington D.C., Department of Cultural Affairs, 1971), 2.

[26] Margarida Sant'Anna, "Biographical Data," in *Antonio Henrique Amaral*, by Antônio Henrique Amaral, Maria Alice Milliet, and Margarida Sant'Anna (São Paulo, BR: Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, 2014), 252.

and the United States.[27] The other reference for the banana fruit was summed up in a vague and brief quote by Amaral saying, "he sees the fruit as 'a symbol of Brazil'."[28] Furthermore, the content of this exhibition pamphlet praised Amaral's success in the international art world, evading the artist's intention or concept behind his own work. From a reader and audience perspective, it is easy to assume that the banana paintings illustrate a fruitful, lucrative, tropical environment, however many of the titles of Amaral's works listed in this exhibition pamphlet connote violence and destruction. In particular, there are three titles, *Rotting Bananas, Umbilical Rupture, and Small Rotting Banana on a* Plate, that bring attention to the fact that the paintings shown at the Pan-American Union show stray from the tropical allusions that Gómez-Sicrez insinuated. Because the Pan-American Union pamphlet only provides a list of works without accompanying images, it is impossible to know if the oil paintings presented at this show corroborate the violence of the *Campos de batalha* series, however these titles do not indicate an idyllic, abundant, and fertile scene.[29]

Veiled by the suggestion of reciprocal exchange, Gómez-Sicre's interpretation of Amaral's paintings omitted the reality of Brazil's tumultuous political and social climate

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[27] This projection of Brazil as an agricultural ally of the United States is evocative of Disney's efforts to embody the mutual relationship of Brazil and the U.S. during Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy of 1933 in the figure of a Green Parrot fondly known as José (Zé) Carioca. Zé is cast as a malandro, the Brazilian term for a street-smart scoundrel, from Rio de Janeiro who is known for his street smarts. Essentially propaganda for the Good Neighbor Policy, this collection of shorts depicts Zé Carioca as a friend of Donald Duck and follows them on their adventures in Rio and South America.

[28] Sant'Anna, "Biographical Data," in *Antonio Henrique*, 252.

[29] Amaral's collection of works does not include any paintings with these titles. It seems that the titles were either changed (in translation at the time of the show or were changed at a later date) or they are not accessible to the public at this time.

at that time. Further, the United States supported the 1964 military coup and covertly provided armed force provisions on the eve of the April takeover in the case of violent civilian opposition, naming the event known as *Operation Brother Sam*.[30] After the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959) and during the cold war, the United States, concerned about the spread of Communism, became increasingly involved in global policies.[31] Recent declassified documents point to the coercive role of the United States in supporting the Brazilian military coup.[32] Besides dismissing a more critical analysis of not only the reality of the international politics at that time in the Pan American Union show, Gómez-Sicre's pamphlet also failed to develop a dialogue around Amaral's banana metaphor with Brazilian cultural and historical production.

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[30] James N. Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 46-47. Operation Brother Sam was a contingency plan developed by the United States that was prepared in order to provide logistical support to the Brazilian right-wing militants. Such support was provided in arms, ammunition, motor gas, jet fuel, aviation gas, diesel, kerosene, and ammunition ships. This plan was never put into action, as the Brazilian military coup was swift. However, U. S. officials continued to deny the White House's support, claiming the takeover was specifically a homegrown, Brazilian event.

[31] James N. Green, *We Cannot Remain Silent: Opposition to the Brazilian Military Dictatorship in the United States*, 39.

[32] Kornbluh, "Brazil Marks 40th Anniversary of Military Coup: Declassified Documents Shed Light on U.S. Involvement," The National Security Archive. U.S. Ambassador Lincoln Gordon, who was known for being involved with Latin American economic policies and international development efforts, such as the Alliance for Progress, convinced President Lyndon B. Johnson in Washington D. C. to support the military coup on April 1, 1964. The U.S.

## III. SYMBOLISM IN AMARAL'S BANANA PAINTINGS

Several other critics have analyzed Amaral's work with regard to the symbolism in his banana paintings. Venezuelan art critic, Bélgica Ródriguez, noted that "the tropical fruit was readily converted by the artist into a model for not only the state, but also for the Brazilian state of mind." Ródriguez's statement is suggestive of the tropical and exotic stereotypes that outside perspectives often ascribe to Brazilian society. The symbol of the banana in Brazilian modern and contemporary painting appeared in the works of other artists well before Antônio Amaral's *Campos de batalha* series. Two of the most influential artists during the modernist movement in Brazil during the 1920s, Anita Malfatti and Tarsila do Amaral, both incorporated the symbolism of the banana fruit into their work. Appearing in a basket along with pineapples and oranges, the banana can be seen in Malfatti's self-portrait *Tropical* (1917) and later, in Tarsila do Amaral's well-known paintings, a Negra (1923), *Abaporu* (1928), and *Antropófagia* (1929) in the form of a banana leaf in the background.[33] Tarsila's *Antropófagia* became the inspiration for one of Brazil's largest cultural movements titled after her painting. In the 1920s, this primitive, colonial trope was reinvigorated when modernist writer Oswald de Andrade wrote his "Manifesto anthtropófago" ("Cannibal Manifesto")(1928). *Antropófagia*

[33] Morais, "O corpo contra os metais da oppressão," in *Antonio Henrique*, 38. Amaral has stated that his depiction of the monumental banana fruit was not inspired directly from these images, but was instead conceived of after seeing Andrade's play *O rei da vela* (1937), in which the main character holds a giant phallic banana.

(anthropophagy) refers to the historical practice of cannibalism by indigenous populations. During the first encounters between European explorers and South American Natives, many of the tribes were branded as savage and barbaric because of their cultural practices, many of which included taboos such as cannibalism, nudity, and the lack of a "true" religion.[34] Writers and artists, some of whom had never traveled to Brazil or encountered the indigenous population there, depicted the cultural practice of eating human flesh for European populations, who viewed it as something exotic and terrifying.[35]

In Leslie Bary's translation and analysis of Andrade's manifesto, she states that it "challenges the dualities civilization/barbarism, modern/primitive, and original/derivative, which had informed the construction of Brazilian culture since the days of the colony."[36] Accompanied by a sketch of modern painter Tarsila do Amaral's oil painting *Abaporu* (1928) in *Revista de anthropophagia* (Review of Anthropophagy), Andrade's application of the concept of cannibalism took on the erudite and scientific term *Anthropophagy*, adding an heir of sophistication to the human consumption of man. Unlike the ethnocentric act of othering in de Bry's sixteenth century image of native South Americans eating the flesh of a human body, the "Cannibalist Manifesto" states that, "cannibalism alone unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically." Therefore the consumption of other cultures is universal, imposing the same "primitive" conventions on the Western world as they claimed the rights to others' territories, rights,

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[34]Rebecca Parker Brienen, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 120.

[35] Darlene J. Sadlier, *Brazil Imagined* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008),
16.

[36] Leslie Bary, "Oswald de Andrade's 'Cannibalist Manifesto,' 35.

and lives during the eras of exploration and imperialism. Further, the manifesto sought to end the colonial stereotypes through polemical recognition, turning the act of cannibalism in favor of Brazil's population, who would devour the cultural productions of other civilizations and regurgitate those morsels into something specifically Brazilian. This concept grew roots throughout the cultural production in Brazil as it was exemplified in artworks, literature, movies, and other derivative movements, such as Tropicalism.[37]

Andrade encouraged Brazilian artists to critically appropriate cultural influences from other countries, particularly Europe and the United States, in order to create works that would display a uniquely Brazilian national identity. By identifying with the cannibalistic rituals of certain indigenous tribes in Brazil, artist, writers, filmmakers, and musicians revitalized the term *anthropófagia* to model a dialogue between Western influences and Brazilian culture to lead to a liberated and separate identity. Scholars Bélgica Rodriguez, Frederico Morais, and Edward Sullivan mention *anthropófagia* in their writings on Amaral's banana series as relating to Brazilian culture as well as the historical practices of oil painting and still lifes. However, the interpretation of the banana fruit as a surrogate body encourages more literal associations with the act of cannibalism. Through the act of looking, the viewer consumes and digests the

[37] Spearheaded by the singers and songwriters, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, Tropicalism appeared primarily in a group of musicians, although it surfaced in television as well. Taking its name from Hélio Oitica's installation *Tropicália*, the lyrics and songs drew influences and subject matter from the tropical and idyllic projections of Brazil.[37] Further building off of the multicultural approach of Oswald de Andrade's Anthropophagy, the Tropicalists's songs incorporated Brazil's own artistic and musical productions, the mass media fueled consumer culture, and the capitalist presence of the United States and Europe in a self conscious examination of their own national identity. Through an ironic amalgamation of high and low brow subjects, the movement brought into context the influence of foreign countries, elite culture, and the marginalized society for the creation of a national image.

composition *Campo de batalha 3* and therefore the banana. The fruit, suggestive of a human body, is presented to the audience on a plate with utensils, additionally encouraging the idea of cannibalism. Further, the presumed body evokes the lush environment of Brazil, playing into the exotic and tropical stereotypes often associated with the country and its population. No other individual embodied this stereotypical "Brazilian state of mind" more than the banana-wearing, coquettish, flashy persona of singer and performer Carmen Miranda.

Evocative of the images of Albert Eckhout and Tarsila do Amaral, Miranda physically wore parts of Brazil's tropical produce on her head, namely the banana. The act of wearing flashy jewelry while singing and shaking her hips made her a sexual attraction, further exemplified in the fecund and ripe fruit worn on her hat. In a performance in the movie *The Gang's All Here* (1943), Miranda danced with an ensemble of female dancers, who held props of bananas and strawberries. Within this performance, *New York Times* critic Ana Rita Mendonça notes the phallic presence of the bananas, and a filming effect applied to the performance, created a kaleidoscopic vaginal formation, which was further sexualized by the presence of the strawberries between the legs of the synchronized dancers.[38] Mendonça writes, "One or two of his (referring to director Busby Berkeley) dance spectacles seem to stem straight from Freud."[39] This quotation recognizably refers to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis on sexual behavior and desires.

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[38] Ana Rita Mendonça, "The Brazilian Bombshell," in *Carmen Miranda foi a Washington* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Record, 1999), 103.

[39] *The New York Times*, December 23, 1943, accessed December 13, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9D02E7D61E3CEE3BBC4B51DFB4678388659EDE.

Under the assumption that Carmen Miranda embodied the identity of all of Latin Americans, foreigners outside of the southern hemisphere received a homogenized perception of all of South American's and the cultural diversity within Brazil, as well. The Carmen Miranda documentary *Bananas is My Business* (1995) notes that the Brazilian Bombshell recognized that her American audience did not understand a word she was saying during her Broadway performances, however they still loved her.[40] In her song "Disseram que voltei Americanizada" ("They Say I've Come Back Americanized"), Miranda defends the backlash she received from the nationalist critics of Brazil, who noted she was perpetuating an image of the country that was false. In her lyrics she states, "Eu que nasci com o samba, e vivo no terreiro" (I was born with samba and I live the simple life). In reality, Carmen Miranda was originally from Portugal and she played up the tropical and exotic stereotypes of not only Brazil but of all of Latin America. Her performances included an exaggerated, thick Latin American accent, often incorporating a heavy emphasis on the "r," and the mispronunciation of American words, like her famous song "Sous-American Way". Dressed in the clothing from a ritual in Bahia, a Brazilian state noted for having a large population of African slave descendants, Carmen Miranda appropriated a very specific tradition attributed to a small population of Brazilians to stand for a national image. Not only was this an inauthentic representation of the national identity, but also her appearance did not reflect the population of Bahia, communicating a whitewashed Brazil to the rest of the western hemisphere. Carmen Miranda was introduced to the world as a symbol of prosperity and amiable trade

[40] *Carmen Miranda: Bananas is My Business,* directed and screenplay by Helena Solberg, International Cinema, 1995.

between the United States and Brazil during Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy.[41]

This international policy is referenced directly in Amaral's 1968 painting *Boa Vizinhança* (Good Neighbor), which depicts an under ripened banana situated at the junction of a Brazilian and American flag. Seen at the bottom of the canvas, the Brazilian flag that usually reads, "Ordem e Progresso" (Order and Progress) now only reads "ESSO," a reference to the leading Standard Oil Company (now Exxon) based out of the United States. The suggestion of oil as a lucrative trade commodity in connection with a single banana alludes to the concept of the *banana republic* and the imperialism of the United Fruit Company, a United States operation that grew tropical fruit, specifically bananas, on plantations in Central and South American countries. This company had operations in Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, and Colombia. Among the foremost criticisms of the United Fruit Company is the fact that the operation had a long-lasting impact on the political and economic development of these countries, which came to rely on it for their national income. Other judgments include an impoverished working class and empowered foreign populations predominantly from the United States that settled in the organization's various locations. The concept of the *banana republic* is relevant to the depiction of the banana fruit in Amaral's oil paintings through the broader themes of imperialism and international commerce.

In "Um visão do exterior" ("A View from Abroad" 1996), U.S. art historian Edward Sullivan analyzes Amaral's extensive body of work and avoids making a connection with foreign stereotypes, focusing instead on the formal nature of the artist's work. Sullivan asserts that the repetitive nature of Amaral's subject matter is evocative of

[41] Morais, "O corpo contra os metais," in *Antonio Henrique Amaral: Obra em processo*, 40.

Andy Warhol's Pop Art, calling attention to the mechanically reproduced silkscreens of the Campbell soup collection, the oversized sculptures by Claes Oldenburg, and the flag paintings by Jasper Johns.[42] Frederico Morais states that Amaral's approach to his *Campos de batalha* paintings are evocative of the American photorealist movement in the United States during the 60s and 70s, however Amaral did not necessarily identify with this assertion.[43]

Amaral's attention to detail and his depiction of the fruit through a photorealistic technique bring the historical reality of oppression closer to the viewer. The artist relied on a process in which he arranged and photographed bananas, ropes, knives, and forks, later using the photos to paint his compositions. Amaral was recently included in a group exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art titled *Pop International*, which exhibited some of the works from artists who were part of the Nova Figuração (New Figuration) group in Brazil. Nova Figuração was a movement in Brazil that marked a return to the figure in art in a movement away from geometric abstraction.[44] In the *Pop International* show and in the writing of other scholars, Amaral has often been included among the

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[42] Edward J. Sullivan, "Uma visão do exterior," in *Antônio Henrique Amaral: obra em processo*, by Frederico Morais, Maria Allice Milliet, and Edward J. Sullivan (São Paulo: DBA, 1996), 283.

[43] Frederico Morais, "O corpo contra os metais da opressão," in *Antonio Henrique Amaral: Obra em Processo*, by Antonio Henrique Amaral, et al. (São Paulo: DBA, 1997), 297. In particular, there is a compelling connection to Andy Warhol's artwork for the Velvet Underground and Nico album cover (1967), which features a yellow banana that can be peeled back to show its pink tinted fruit. Important to my argument as the banana as a surrogate human body, Warhol's depiction of the banana also makes a similar connection, although pointedly a sexual one.

[44] Claudia Calirman, "Pop and Politics in Brazil," in *International Pop*, by M. Darsie Alexander, et al. (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 2015), 120. Geometric abstraction was an artistic style that emerged in the 1950s and was practiced by a group of artists from Brazil. The style focused on the rationality of geometry as a means to reject notions of viewer subjectivity.

artists of Brazil's Nova Figuração movement, although this group has been characterized predominantly as a group of artists from Rio de Janeiro, among them Rubens Gerchman, Antonio Dias, Carlos Vergara, and Ivan Freitas.[45]

With this return to figuration influenced by Pop art, Amaral's painting *Homenagem séc. XX/XXI* (1968) shows four open mouths with tongues rising out of a stiff shirt collar and tie. In the painting, the stars and stripes in the background are emblematic of those that would be found on the U.S. flag. The base of the image is a cluster of four stars with the colors characteristic of the Brazilian flag. The stars, although colored differently, are indicative of those that would be found on the shoulder bars of a colonel in the Brazilian military. The pink malformed face of the individual is cut off at the nose, giving the form the appearance of a phallus. Similar to Amaral's *Boa Vizinhança*, this image exemplifies a seemingly political comment on international relations between Brazil and the United States and mocks those politicians and administrators that hold official power. Further, Amaral's image insinuates the U.S. support of the military coup that initiated the twenty-one years of dictatorship. Calirman asserts that the *Pop International* exhibition shows the major similarities between Brazilian Nova Figuração artists and U.S. Pop artists in incorporating banal objects from daily life, popular and mass culture, and high and low brow themes.[46] She notes the significant difference between the two movements was that the artists of Nova Figuração included political content, responding to censorship and internal turmoil of their own

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[45] "Nova Figuração" [New Figuration], http://memoriasdaditadura.org.br/, accessed October 16, 2016, http://memoriasdaditadura.org.br/movimentos-artisticos/nova-figuracao/.

[46] Claudia Calirman, "Pop and Politics in Brazil," in *International Pop*, by M. Darsie Alexander, et al. (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 2015), 120.

nation.

Another artist who belonged to Nova Figuração, Rubens Gerchman, depicted a range of topics from Brazil in his work, including soccer and urban life alongside the atrocities of the military dictatorship. Of particular interest to this study are his 1965 paintings titled *Os desaparecidos* (*The Disappeared*), which are portraits of individuals who had gone missing at the hand of the military dictatorship. Sometimes accompanied by descriptions of the events leading up to their disappearances, these depictions are stylized and provide little information about who the individual is. The vague details and often missing accounts of the events surrounding an individual's disappearance during the military dictatorship often left them without identity. The title *Os desaparecidos* involves a mass identity of those who were essentially plucked off of the face of the earth and never seen or heard from again. Other than the different arrangements of the fruit and silverware within the nineteen *Campos de batalha* paintings, there is no single detail that separates one banana from another. The banality and anonymity of the subject matter in both Amaral's *Campos de batalha* series and Gerchman's *Os desaparecidos*, which are evocative of posters of missing people, indicates that the occurrence of disappearances was something familiar and quotidian.

In a similar way, Gerchman's painting *A bela Lindonéia: A Giaconda do subúrbio* portrays a woman with a black eye, framed with the words, "An impossible love. Eighteen years of age, she died instantly." Gerchman's *A bela Lindonéia* is said to have inspired the Tropicalist song *Lindonéia* (1968), written by Caetano Veloso. The song explores the arbitrariness of a marginalized woman's life during the dictatorship. Her name is a combination of the Portuguese words *linda* (pretty) and *feia* (ugly). Lindonéia escapes the reality of her life in the suburbs of a large city through consumer culture, with

music and arbitrary commodities that distract her from the turmoil of everyday life and the severity of the military dictatorship. In the lyrics, she appears "in a photograph on the other side of life," which represents a life that the listener does not see or is not a part of.[47] She is alone and part of the poor or working class, surrounded by a violent atmosphere in which she goes missing, however it is unclear if her disappearance was a result of the authoritarian regime or from some other circumstance.

The adjectives used to describe Lindonéia are words, such as *solteira* (single) and *cor parda* (brown-skinned), that would be found in a police report for a missing person.[48] In the end, her absence is a mystery, but it appears that no one is truly concerned about her. Chris Dunn, a scholar of Brazilian culture during this time, argues that the song gave the listener insight into the everyday life of a young woman under military rule, drawing attention to the violent imagery in the song's lines, "ripped to pieces, run over/dead dogs in the streets/police surveying the scene/the sun hitting the fruit, bleeding."[49] The themes in the song Lindonéia resonate with Amaral's image in that it incorporates the low brow and cheap banana fruit. Conjuring images of chaos, where people are trampled and dogs lie dead in the streets, the song, like Amaral's *Campos de batalha* series, shows that life under the military dictatorship had become a violent and dangerous ordeal. The representation of the banana in *Campo de Batalha 3* is evocative of the song's imagery of battered fruit and the insinuation of violence in daily life in Brazil. However, Amaral's *Campos de batalha* series does not adhere to the Pop art style, and instead shows the artist's skills as a technical painter through naturalistic and highly detailed still lifes.

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[47] Dunn, *Brutality Garden: Tropicália and the Emergence of Brazilian Counterculture*, 116.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

Edward Sullivan draws a corollary between Amaral's grim, photo-realistic paintings of mutilated bananas with the naturalistic still lives of the Dutch court painter Albert Eckhout during the brief period of Dutch rule in Brazil from 1630 to 1654.[50] Commissioned by the Dutch colony's governor general, German count Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, Eckhout painted and sketched Brazilian landscapes, populations, and produce from 1637-1644. Eckhout was among other artists, such as George Marcgraf, Guilherme Piso and Frans Post, who were responsible for portraying the newly "discovered" countries of South America and Asia during Europe's seventeenth-century exploration.[51] Sullivan attributes Eckhout's depictions of Brazil's vegetables and fruits as "signifiers of the plentitude of the New World that undoubtedly exerted great fascination."[52]

Sullivan's analysis is most evident in Eckhout's seventeenth-century still life titled *Bananas, goiabas, e outras frutas* (*Bananas, Guavas, and Other Fruits*). In the painting, there is a cornucopia of fruit laid out on a table in front of a picturesque sky of billowing clouds. As stated in the painting's title, the banana can be seen in bunches, sometimes peeled, while a few banana leaves are folded over the myriad of tropical fruits. The image is bright and exemplary of the plenitude that Brazil offered European colonization. Eckhout's paintings have been exalted as veritable representations of the population and landscape of Dutch colonial Brazil, because of his careful naturalistic

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[50] Sullivan, "Uma visão do exterior," in *Antônio Henrique Amaral: obra*, 280.

[51] Rebecca Parker Brienen, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch in Brazil* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 11.

[52] Edward J. Sullivan, "Uma visão do exterior," in *Antônio Henrique Amaral: obra em processo*, by Frederico Morais, Maria Allice Milliet, and Edward J. Sullivan (São Paulo: DBA, 1996), 16.

approach.[53] Similarly, Amaral renders the objects in *Campo de batalha 3* in a naturalistic way with keen attention to detail, just as Eckhout did in his Dutch still lifes. The shadows in *Campo de batalha 3* exemplify the volume of the fruit, though Amaral's painterly techniques are most evident in the texture of the banana's skin, the subtle rendering and reflections on the pewter utensils, and the ethereal, wispy shadow on the plate. Eckhout's still lifes were visual testimonies to the prosperity and stability under Maurits's colonial administration, as they depicted the abundance and fecundity of Brazil's produce and land.[54]

The landscape paintings, still lifes, and portraits were originally displayed in the ceremonial spaces at the Count's estate and viewed by officials, ambassadors, and other elite European social groups, who would have found the subject matter exotic, as it depicted fruits and vegetables rare to Europe.[55] Eckhout's work is part of a long-standing tradition of literature and art that embellishes a nation's natural resources and that country's potential. Appearing under the term *ufanismo*, this aspirational and boastful praise about Brazil's beautiful landscape and abundant wealth has become a practice of national Brazilian pride.[56] Even during the rule of the military dictatorship, when Brazil's political and social realities were evidently precarious, the government used the practice of *ufanismo* in propaganda to boost national sentiment.

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[53] Brienen, *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch in Brazil*, 198.

[54] Ibid, 199.

[55] Ibid.

[56] The term *ufanismo* was inspired from Afonso Celso de Assis Figueiredo Júnio's book *Porque me ufano do meu país* (1901). Ufanar is a Spanish verb that means to feel proud and boastful. Although this term was founded in the 20th century, the tradition of praise for Brazil's potential wealth and success can be traced back to European's interpretation of Brazil during the *Encounter*.

Nina Schneider, in her book *Brazilian Propaganda: Legitimizing an Authoritarian Regime* (2014) and Chris Dunn in his *Contracultura Alternative Arts and Social Transformation in Authoritarian Brazil* (2016) have regarded some of the Brazilian government's propaganda in the 60s and 70s through television and newspapers as *ufanismo*. Dunn notes that President Médici hired public relation experts to create propaganda that encouraged viewers to see that current time in Brazilian history as prosperous and successful.[57] Schneider asserts that this approach was overtly propagandistic, linking the overabundance of "Grande Brasil" (Great Brazil) under patriotism for the authoritarian government.[58] Not only is President Médici's rule referenced as the most contentious period of the dictatorship, but it is also noted as a period of intense economic growth, known as the Brazilian Miracle. This influx of wealth encouraged an optimistic perspective of Brazil as an emerging global presence. However, propaganda, marketing advertisements, and the national press were heavily controlled by federal censors, which chose to elaborate on the successes of the nation instead of the harsh reality of censorship and human rights' abuses.[59] In a similar way, Amaral's depictions of the rotting banana fruit highlight the government's attempt to evade its oppressive actions in favor of nationalism.

The main subject matter of the *Campos de batalha* series are the exotic fruits that were associated with the copious and tropical Brazilian landscape in Eckhout's colonial

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[57] Christopher Dunn, *Contracultura: Alternative Arts and Social Transformation in Authoritarian Brazil* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 580/6190, Kindle.

[58] Nina Schneider, *Brazilian Propaganda: Legitimizing an Authoritarian Regime* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2014), 15. The *ufanistic* propaganda did not last long and later was replaced by an optimistic message about daily life, such as family values, street safety, and even morals.

[59] Dunn, *Contracultura: Alternative*, 576/6190.

still lifes. However, unlike Eckhout's depictions, Amaral's images show a totally different reality, as they are withering and decaying. In *Bananas, goiabas, e outras frutas*, a few of the citrus fruits are cut open, showing their juicy and healthy insides, unlike the grim state of Amaral's banana fruit. The setting in *Campo de batalha 3* is lit by an artificial light source, not displayed in the vast countryside under the natural sunlight like the fruits in *Bananas, goibas, e outras frutas*. Amaral's banana paintings cannot be read in the same context as the early colonial still lifes but rather are understood, as Flusser initiated, under the context of the military dictatorship. There is a reference to the tropical environment and the idea of wealth through the inclusion of the banana in Amaral's depictions, but the fruit elicits readings of oppression and violence instead. Amaral shows that Brazil's reality of human rights' abuses cannot be covered up by a superficial illustration of prosperity and security, as attempted in the Brazilian government's propaganda. The *Campos de batalha* series highlights the other side to Médici's economic miracle, which was the institutionalization of systematic torture.

## IV. INSTITUTIONAL TORTURE, TECHNIQUES, AND DISSIDENTS

In a letter to Flusser in October of 1974, Amaral stated that bananas had changed in meaning for him over the six years from the time that he had painted and sketched them.[60] He proceeded to thank Flusser for writing about his images in a manner that exposed a deeper significance. Stated by both Flusser and Morais, the bananas in Amaral's *Campos de batalha* paintings take on significance outside of the quotidian yellow fruit. Through a deeper understanding of the Brazilian culture, and the context of the military dictatorship, Amaral's oil painting series unveils symbolism not immediately conveyed.

In *Campo de batalha 3*, the knife, fork, and rope imply a power over the banana, as they detain and mutilate the fruit. In an interview in 2011, Amaral says that the *Campos de batalha* series "is a visual reflection on the sadomasochism of Brazilian reality, the sadomasochistic relationship between authority and people."[61] Sadomasochism is an erotic practice in which one or both individuals receive sexual pleasure from either inflicting pain or enduring pain from their counterpart. The sadist is

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[60] Antônio Henrique Amaral to Vilém Flusser, October 12, 1974, ICAA Record ID: 1111047, International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

[61] Antônio Henrique Amaral, "Antonio Henrique Amaral," interview by Jardel Dias Calvacanti, Digestivo Cultural, last modified October 1, 2011, accessed December 20, 2016, http://www.digestivocultural.com/entrevistas/entrevista.asp?codigo=41&titulo=Antonio_Henrique_Amaral.

the individual who dominates the other participant, the masochist, through physical or verbal abuse. The sexual and violent nature of the painting *Campo de batalha 3* lends itself to the concept of sadomasochism in the erotic practice and the larger scope of the authoritarian regime. In the image, a dried drip sits on the left lip of the plate, showing the lifeless banana as an object that bleeds, cries, sweats, or even ejaculates. Encouraging a sexual reading, the soft insides of the banana closely resemble a dissected corpus cavernosa, the name for the two regions of spongy, erectile tissue in a penis. The bondage-like restraint and the phallic shape of the banana in *Campo de batalha 3* evoke associations with this erotic power dynamic. Amaral goes on to state that the authoritarian regime saw the Brazilian citizens as "people who should be silenced, muzzled, controlled and, if necessary, tortured so as not to disturb the march of the dictatorship."[62] The artist connects the practice of sadomoasochism with the violence and control that occurred under the authoritarin regime. In *Campo de batalha 3*, there is an implicit hierarchy to the utensils, as someone must operate the silverware for them to carry the violence out on the fruit. Not included in the composition is presumably an unseen feaster, who is responsible for the tangled mass that sits before the viewer. Like these perfunctory instruments that are part of a larger system invested in the mutilation of this banana fruit, the military dictatorship implemented official organizations to carry out the interrogations and torture of those deemed a threat to the authoritarian government.

By 1969, the severity of AI-5 set in, and opposition groups hid, fled the country, or fought back, resulting in an armed conflict between the military agents and guerilla groups. It was through interrogation with torture that government officials sought to

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[62]Ibid.

gather information on the leftist organizations, such as their members, activities, and headquarters.[63] The main oppressive agencies were the DOI-CODI alliance (Department of Information Operation and the Center of Internal Defense Operations), SNI (National Information Service), and DOPS (Department of Public Safety).[64] DOI-CODI was a military apparatus that coordinated arrests, interrogations, and analyses of the information obtained by detainees. These oppressive agencies were specialized in their assignments and within those departments, there were expert individuals, as well. Torture had become systematic and was taught to agents by other experts in the field to ensure that these organizations were well trained and efficient in carrying out their clandestine activities.[65]

In *Campo de batalha 3*, the knife and the fork had been used with clinical precision to cut and dissect the body of the yellow fruit. Precariously balanced atop the decaying banana, the sharp and violent fork tines are pointed upward and outward toward the space of the viewer, imparting a sense of danger to the audience and bringing them physically closer to bodily harm. The arrangement of the silverware is considered boorish and unrefined in customary table etiquette, and the feaster who leaves their fork in this

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[63] Archdiocese of São Paulo, comp., *Torture in Brazil: A Shocking Report on the Pervasive Use of Torture by Brazilian Military Governments, 1964-1979*, trans. Jaime Wright, ed. Joan Dassin (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998), 81. Although they all opposed the military government at heart, most of the groups of the *luta armada* (armed fight) were not united and therefore, their number declined drastically after Médici began his presidency.

[64] DOI-CODI and SNI were military organizations, while DOPS was part of state security and therefore run by the State Governor.

[65] Archdiocese of São Paulo, comp., *Torture in Brazil: A Shocking Report on the Pervasive Use of Torture by Brazilian Military Governments, 1964-1979*, 13-15. The condensed English version of *Brasil: Nunca Mais* (*BNM)*, *Torture in Brazil* names the United States federal officer and advisor for the Central Intelligence Agency in Latin America, Dan Mitrione, as one of the officials who instructed over one hundred Brazilian military officers about their pervasive torture methods in the 1960s.

position gambles with being stabbed.[66] Presumed to be the kitchen or the dining table of a house, the setting in *Campo de batalha 3* is depicted in an unconventional way, turning a place for eating and nourishment into a crowded torture chamber. Houses were frequent locations for the interrogation and imprisonment of individuals kidnapped by the repressive agencies.

Connoting a safe and loving environment, the ironic name "Grandma's House," was given to the DOI-CODI center in São Paulo.[67] Many of the interrogations occurred in prisons, however other clandestine centers included military hospitals and rural houses, where the different rooms of the building were repurposed as cells. In her book, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, Elaine Scarry asserts that torture rooms become "an agent of pain," although houses and private rooms indicate shelter and protection.[68] One prisoner, a journalist and salesman by the name of Renato Oliveira da Motta, recalled that the house he had been taken to, stating:

> …had several rooms but [he] was able to observe the existence of only three: A room approximately 4 x 4 square meters, with a closet where torture instruments and clothes were kept…. [The room] had a sealed window and two large rectangular cement blocks on the floor. One of the blocks had a metal ring attached to its side; on the other, there were two rings for holding the feet of prisoners. In the small room, there was a radio and a record player being tuned alternately to their highest volume.[69]

Subtle torture tactics were meant to keep the detainee on edge and instill fear into them. The two electronic devices mentioned at the end of this testimony were most likely used

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[66] Craig Claiborne, *Elements of Etiquette: A Guide to Table Manners in an Imperfect World* (New York, NY: W. Morrow, 1992), 36.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1985), 40.

[69] Archdiocese of São Paulo, *Torture in Brazil: A Shocking*, 177.

against the prisoner, either to keep him awake, break him psychologically, or to mask his screams of pain.

The most widely used instrument of torture during the Brazilian military dictatorship is referred to as the Parrot's Perch (pau de arara), which suspended victims from a wooden pole behind their knees. With their hands bound, these individuals were incapacitated and torturers would then beat, water board, electrocute, and/or choke the victim.[70] Other victims suffered chemical and cigarette burns, and drowning. The bound bodies of these victims are mirrored in Amaral's *Campo de batalha 3*, in which the bruised and maimed banana can be seen tied to the rigid structures of the knife and the fork. Like the Brazilian population that was forcibly and violently subjected to these modes of torture, the docile banana is a cheap fruit sadistically objectified as an arbitrary plaything for the unseen feaster, who delights in its decay and mutilation. A 1969 December cover of *VEJA* drew a corollary between the interrogations under the dictatorship with torture practices from medieval times, encouraging the view of the military regime as sadistic.[71]

This issue's cover shows a print of a medieval torture chamber with victims subjected to painful treatments and tied to devices, stirring up implications of the crude and brutal treatment of the military dictatorship on the dissident population in Brazil during this time. Inside the magazine, the main story highlighted the occurrence of torture in Brazil with a story about 23-year-old Chael Charles Schreier, who was affiliated with

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[70] Archdiocese of São Paulo, *Torture in Brazil: A Shocking*, 78. Undoubtedly, this is not the end of the list of torture tactics that could be applied to an individual placed on the Parrot's Perch.

[71] Olivio Tavares de Araújo, "Banana de volta," *Veja*, March 1975, 96-98.

the Palmares Revolutionary Armed Vanguard (VAR-Palmares). He was arrested, taken to DOPS (Department of Social and Political Order), and was killed during torture. He was beaten so severely that his death certificate stated that he sustained seven broken ribs, brain hemorrhages, internal bleeding, and intense bruising. A critical commentary on the institutional procedure of arrests and interrogation, 1969 *Veja* article depicts the human rights' abuses under the military dictatorship as cruel and gratuitous, a concept Amaral exemplified in several of his *Campos de batalha* paintings. His composition *A morte do sábado* (A Death on Saturday 1975) is the most violent and visceral banana painting and was interestingly his last on the subject matter.

The banana fruit in *A morte do sábado* closely resembles an eviscerated body, as the viewer can make out the structure of a ribcage and what appears to be fatty tissue. The color palette is far more varied than in the other compositions of *Campos de batalha*, as Amaral employed reds and pinks, resembling meat rather than fruity endocarp. The forks in *A morte do sábado* insatiably impale and devour the banana. This image is seen as an homage to Vladimir Herzog, a journalist and university professor who was suspiciously killed in a jail cell after being arrested and detained at the DOPS (Department of Social and Political Order) headquarters. Although labeled as a suicide by the military, photographs and a coroner's report later showed that the police staged his suicide. Other than *A morte do sábado*, the bananas in the rest of the series are all singular, as they were plucked from a bunch and moved to an inexact location that remains unknown.

Within the compositions of *Campos de batalha,* there is no indication of what will become of the fruit. However, the viewer can surmise that the bananas will continue to

rot and probably be disposed of. Amaral's banana fruit as human bodies mirrors the reality of clandestine killings and disappearances. Other than the homage to Herzog, Amaral's bananas are all titled in sequential order, implying that the identities of these individuals were not only insignificant to the violent agencies carrying out these killings, but through the event of their disappearance were stripped of their identity.[72]

A contemporary of Amaral, Artur Barrio also worked with the subject of disappearances and anonymity, and placed artworks made of white sheets wrapped around a collection of debris and waste, such as rotting garbage, meat, used diapers, and bundled together in a way that resembled a human body. These works were placed in public spaces around Brazil's urban areas, and were encountered by the general public, instead of viewed in the ritual spaces of museums and galleries. The bundles were dropped in Brazil's urban areas, which worked to make these human rights abuses readily seen and acknowledged by a larger, public audience.[73] Barrio's 1970 work titled *Situação..... T/T1…... (Situation…...T/T1)* was comprised of trash, which would eventually rot and smell, introducing a phenomenological experience for the unsuspecting viewer who happened upon the bloodied bundles. Barrio's works exemplify the dominant art production in Brazil outside of artistic institutions by occupying public spaces and ultimately interfering with viewers' daily lives. The disturbing aspect of *Situações* was their likeness to dumped human bodies, a perception that was heightened

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[72] Rebecca J. Atencio, "Literary and Official Truth-Telling," in *Memory's Turn: Reckoning with Dictatorship in Brazil* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 2152/4384, Kindle edition.

[73] Claudia Calirman, "Artur Barrio: A New Visual Aesthetic," in *Brazilian Art Under Dictatorship: Antonio Manual, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), Kindle edition.

through the smell of rotting meat and the presence of blood on the white sheets that was used to bundle together the waste and materials. Calirman's use of the word phenomenological in relation to Barrio's work points directly to the viewer's special, perceptual, and sensorial engagement with the art object.[74] Unlike Amaral's paintings of bananas, which require that the viewer understand the symbolism of the subject matter, Barrio's viewer, through touch and smell, can directly experience the artwork. Amaral's depiction of a rotting banana is similar to Barrio's use of rotting materials, as they are suggestive of the individuals who disappeared or were killed at the hand of the military dictatorship. The bruised fruit in *Campo de batalha 3*, rendered in dull yellows and browns, appears to be approaching a degree of maturity in which it might no longer induce hunger. It has begun to rot and decay under the viewer's watch.

[74] Ibid.

## V. CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING OF THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

Following *abertura* and the first direct elections in 1989 after the military dictatorship, artists focused less on political commentary and more towards artistic investigation.[75] Calirman asserts that there was "a great proclivity to leave the past behind and to forget issues related to the politics of repression…."[76] However, in recent years, political and social groups have begun a long process of reckoning with the events of the military dictatorship in an effort to ensure that this period in Brazil's history is never forgotten or repeated. Further developments sought recognition of the events that occurred under the authoritarian rule, which have belonged to a tight-lipped legacy of that time period until more recent attempts. Established in December of 2011 under President Dilma Rousseff, Brazil's Comissão Nacional da Verdade (CNV)(National Truth Commission) researched and documented accounts of human rights' abuses of this time period in order to establish a more cohesive narrative. The CNV published a final report that was released to the general public in 2014, which recounts the methods of torture, the leftist organizations that were targeted by the regime, and the names of the individuals who were forcibly disappeared, naming 243 who went missing and 191 who are

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[75] Claudia Calirman, "Artur Barrio: A New Visual Aesthetic," in *Brazilian Art Under Dictatorship: Antonio Manual, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 2723/4931. Kindle edition.

[76] Ibid, 2737/4931.

considered political deaths. According to this report, considerations for those who were killed during the military dictatorship should account also for those who committed suicide, suffered health disorders from abuse, died while in exile, or went missing while abroad.[77] Other deaths under the military dictatorship not included in this report are listed as rural farmers and native tribes who were massacred in the event of land disputes.[78] Unfortunately, this was eleven years after the dictatorship ended and, although it sought to address some of the issues that remained from that time, it did not seek to uncover all events or develop a complete and total understanding of what occurred.

Further, a need grew for the preservation, or more likely establishment, of testimonies and critical literature on the events of human rights' abuses that occurred during that time. *Brasil: Nunca Mais* and *Dossiê dos mortos e desaparecidos politicos a partir de 1964* (*The Dossier of the Politically Dead and Disappeared from 1964*), compiled by the Commission of Families of the Politically Dead and Disappeared, were both established through an attempt to reconstruct the past events of torture, deaths, and disappearances and to give those who were claimed by the military dictatorship a name and a story. Human rights groups are demanding that certain spaces from that time period be reclaimed by the public and converted into landmarks and standing monuments for the preservation of their histories as prison cells and apparatuses of torture.[79]

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[77] Comissão de Familiares dos Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos and O Centro de Documentação Eremias Delizoicov, "O Dossiê dos Mortos e Desaparecidos a partir de 1964" [The Dossier of the Dead and Disappeared of 1964], Desaparacidos Politicos, accessed August 5, 2016, http://www.desaparecidospoliticos.org.br.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Núcleomemoria and the previous DOI-CODI. Human rights groups and the CNV have considered the idea of creating a memorial out of the infamous House of Death (Casa da morte) Petrópolis, RJ, named because those who were taken to this site

There are individuals who supported the military dictatorship during its twenty-one years in power and there remains a population who still choose to see it in a positive light, stating that it was good for the eradication of communist efforts and the restoration of order. However, the reality of torture, killings, and disappearances is still part of the narrative of Brazil's history of this period. The past relies on the efforts of an active public, government, and academic population to analyze and understand the events through documentation, accounts, and the cultural production in response to Brazil's period under the dictatorship.

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rarely left alive.

# VI. CONCLUSION

With the contemporary efforts for the preservation of sites and evidence of the events of the military dictatorship, Amaral's series acts as material culture from that period in Brazil's history. Present attempts by Brazilian officials bring to mind Flusser's urge for viewers to uncover a new understanding in Amaral's *Campos de batalha* painting. The subversive nature of Amaral's bananas highlights the human rights abuses that occurred under the military dictatorship and the vulnerability of Brazilian citizens at that time. The violent compositions of the *Campos de batalha* series carry a heavy atmosphere of uncertainty, as the passive viewer must face the decomposition and abuse of the bound fruit. The depictions of bananas in Amaral's *Campos de batalha* series are a multifaceted symbol of Brazilian culture, referencing colonial history, physical abuse, cultural movements, international relations, and censorship. Through notions of torture, Amaral's depictions of banana fruits reveal the themes of clandestine human rights' abuses and the arbitrariness of those actions by the authoritarian regime. Amaral was one of many other artists who were all simultaneously grappling with the political and social climate at that time. The banana fruit in Amaral's oil paintings highlight the anonymity of those killed and disappeared at that time. Considering that many of the performance pieces and ephemeral works of artists in during the 60s and 70s only exist through witness accounts and photographs. Amaral's banana series is significant as the paintings survived and can be re-examined in present day in relation to Brazilian history.

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